

WHAT WE CLAIM:

*Claim 1*

1. A shelf stable pasta or rice meal comprising in combination:

(a) a cooked pasta or rice which has been acidified to a pH in the range of about 3.7 to about 4.5;

(b) a sauce for use with said cooked pasta or rice;

wherein a natural pH of said sauce has been raised so as to fall within a pH range of about 5.9 to about 7.2.

2. The shelf stable pasta or rice meal of claim 1, wherein the natural pH of said sauce is raised by the addition of an edible alkaline or base substance to said sauce.

*Claim 3*

3. The shelf stable pasta or rice meal of claim 1, wherein said sauce is one selected from the group consisting of cheese sauce, brown sauce, bordelaise sauce, mushroom brown sauce, white sauce, alfredo sauce, curry sauce, dill sauce, horseradish sauce, veloute sauce, hollandaise sauce, bearnaise sauce, mornay sauce, raisin sauce, cream gravy, gilet gravy and tomato sauce.

*Claim 4*

4. A two part packaged product in which the first part comprises a cooked acidified pasta or rice and the second part comprising a pH adjusted sauce which has a higher pH than said pasta or rice.

5. The two part packaged product of claim 4, wherein the pH of said acidified pasta or rice is in the range of about 3.7 to about 4.5.

6. The two part packaged product of claim 4, wherein the pH of said sauce is higher than the pH of said acidified pasta or rice and is in the range of up to about 7.2.

7. The two part packaged product of claim 6, wherein the pH of said sauce is raised to higher than the pH of said acidified pasta by adding to said sauce an edible alkaline or base substance.

8. The two part packaged product of claim 4, wherein said acidified pasta or rice is hermetically sealed in a container and said pH adjusted sauce is hermetically sealed and separately packaged.

9. The two part packaged product of claim 8, wherein said container is a pouch or serving tray.

10. The two part packaged product of claim 8, wherein said pH adjusted sauce is separately packaged in a pouch and included in said container.

11. A method of providing an acidified pasta or rice meal without the presence of acidic flavor notes in said meal, said method comprising:

- (a) providing a cooked pasta or rice which has been acidified to a pH of from about 3.7 to about 4.5;
- (b) providing a sauce for said pasta or rice;
- (c) raising the pH of said sauce by the addition of an edible alkaline or base substance to the pH of said sauce;

- (d) separately packaging said cooked pasta or rice and said raised pH sauce; and
- (e) mixing said cooked pasta or rice with said raised pH sauce.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein said cooked pasta or rice is packaged in a container and said raised pH sauce is packaged in a separate container which is sold in combination with said container containing said cooked pasta or rice.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein said cooked pasta or rice is packaged in a hermetically sealed pouch or serving tray.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein said raised pH sauce is hermetically sealed in a pouch which is contained with said pouch or serving tray for said cooked pasta or rice.

15. The method of claim 11, wherein said sauce is selected from the group consisting of cheese sauce, brown sauce, bordelaise sauce, mushroom brown sauce, white sauce, alfredo sauce, curry sauce, dill sauce, horseradish sauce, veloute sauce, hollandaise sauce, bearnaise sauce, mornay sauce, raisin sauce, cream gravy, giblet gravy and tomato sauce.

16. The method of claim 11, further comprising heating at least one of said cooked pasta or rice or said raised pH sauce before said mixing step.

17. The method of claim 11, wherein both of said cooked pasta or rice and said raised pH sauce are heated.

18. The method of claim 11, wherein the packaging step of step (d) is conducted under an inert gas and hermetically sealed.

19. The method of claim 11, wherein said packaging of step (d) is conducted by retorting said packaged sauce.

*W/P* 20. A sauce for use with an acidified pasta or rice, said sauce being selected from the group consisting of cheese sauce, brown sauce, bordelaise sauce, mushroom brown sauce, white sauce, alfredo sauce, curry sauce, dill sauce, horseradish sauce, veloute sauce, hollandaise sauce, bearnaise sauce, mornay sauce, raisin sauce, cream gravy, giblet gravy and tomato sauce;

the pH of said sauce being modified to raise its pH in an amount sufficient such that, when said pH modified sauced is mixed with said acidified pasta or rice, the acidic flavor notes present when said acidified pasta or rice and an unmodified sauce are mixed, are muted.